

Conference:

Date:

Location:

Dear Conference Organizer

On behalf of the European Life Scientist Organization (ELSO)'s Career Development Committee, I would like to make you aware of the representation of women scientists among the speakers and chairpersons at this meeting.

By my calculations:

..... out of ..... speakers at the meeting (.....%) are women

..... out of ..... chairpersons at the meeting (.....%) are women

You are probably aware of the problem of the 'leaky pipeline' of women scientists in Europe. Although over half of undergraduates in the life sciences are women, there are progressively fewer and fewer women PhD students, postdocs and junior investigators on the career ladder, and currently only around 5% of top positions are occupied by women.

This is not only a personal disaster for women who fail to achieve their potential in science, but also an economic loss in wasted training and a vast loss of expertise and intellectual capital.

We must do more to encourage women to stay in science and make their way into positions beyond postdoc. Meetings can play an important role in this by providing role models and encouraging talented young women scientists onto the meetings circuit where they can be seen by their peers and network with them.

ELSO's Career Development Committee is working to improve the career opportunities of all young scientists, whether female or male. We consider that a target of 35% women among speakers and chairs is a reasonable goal for the early 21st century.

If your meeting achieved this target ... Bravo! We will make sure that people hear about it!

If not, the next time you organize a conference, will you build this goal into your plan?

Sincerely

On behalf of ELSO's Career Development Committee